was about eight years old, and I got that intense feeling of how do you keep your kid safe? Horrible and tragic things happen, and it's impossible to keep the hurt away from the people you love. As a mom, I could really relate to the material." And while she helmed the ship on her own, she made sure to load it with a crew of companions she knew that she could depend on.

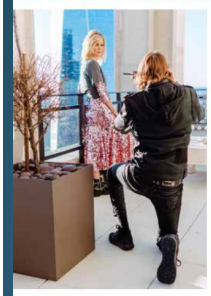
A Little Help from her Friends

In addition to Jack, the cast includes longtime director and sometime mentor Sam Shepard, newcomer Alex Neustaedter as her 14-year-old son, and Homer and Tom Hanks—who flew across the country to film scenes for his three-time co-star and close friend. "What a solid he did me, right?" Meg said. "Tom shot for about half a day, and at the end of our time together, he calls the crew together and he goes, 'Okay, we've gotten very close these past 10 hours and we now know each other really well. And I just want to thank you for being there for my friend, Meg.' How can you not love him?"

"You know, the thing about Tom is that he's as great as you think he's going to be," she beamed about her buddy. "He has what many great artists have—a great curiosity about other people and things," she said. "We share that, along with a deep affection for each other."

The experience was so positive that she is looking for new projects to direct. "I'm looking at all kinds of stuff, and that's what New York does for you; it offers you a lot of choices." One choice is a return to television for the first time in decades to participate in a project written by former *Saturday Night Live* star and TV director Brad Hall—who also happens to be married to *Veep* and *Seinfeld* star Julia Louis-Dreyfus. "I've learned it's best to have a lot of balls in the air and see which one lands," she said.

In the meantime, she's enjoying bringing up Daisy in her favorite neighborhood where she basks in the warmth of Downtown's rebirth since the dark day of the terror attacks 16 years ago. "It was a horrible event, but the ultimate result was that we all got a lot nicer to each other," she reflected. "It's a very powerful thing. People care about each other here. They look after each other. I mean—what more do we have, but each other?"



Behind the Scenes with Downtown Magazine

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20/20 ENGINEERING

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